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REVIEWS AND NOTES.

CONFERENCES OF GERMAN MUNICIPAL STATISTICIANS.*

BY PROFESSOR O. LANDSBERG.

A small group gathered at Berlin in 1879 to attend the first conference of German municipal statisticians. At that date the municipal statistical offices in the Empire numbered only eleven, nine of which were represented at the conference. Körösi came also from Budapest. Now the offices whose heads belong to the Association of German Municipal Statisticians number forty-one and the conferences, at first convened at long intervals, are now held annually.

The rapid development indicated by these facts could not have occurred without the increase in the number of great cities, but the fact that one city after another has established a statistical office shows clearly how the necessity and value of such an office are appreciated by municipal administration. Whoever examines the proceedings at these conferences will find that wherever they have met the city authorities have emphasized the indispensable character of municipal statistics.

It is not my object to show that this recognition is a well deserved reward for the tireless and unselfish support given by municipal statistics to all branches of municipal administration. I shall speak of the statistical work for the cities only so far as it has been discussed at the conferences. Their main theme has been the work of the annual publication, "Das statistische Jahrbuch deutscher Städte." As early as the second conference, in 1885, on motion of Neefe, it was resolved to prepare a statistical yearbook of German cities and the contents were outlined. At every subsequent conference the report on the yearbook has been the center of the program and its distinguished editor (Neefe) has worked unweariedly for the extension and perfection of the series. The number of subjects embraced has steadily increased and the number of cities has risen from 35 in the first edition (1890) to 84 in the seventeenth.

Closely connected with the work for the yearbook has gone a consideration of the statistics of municipal finance. The work of the committee on this topic presided over by Bleicher has forwarded the end in view so remarkably that a financial survey of the entire municipal administration is proposed for the eighteenth issue of the yearbook and can now be carried out. The committee has also examined the difficult question of the value of urban property as a basis for a comparative statistics of property. On this topic also the last conference, basing itself on the preliminary work of the committee, reached unanimous conclusions.

The work of these conferences in administrative statistics has been greatly aided by German municipal officials and their organization into

*This free and abridged translation of an article in the "Deutsches Statistisches Centralblatt" for January 1, 1911, affords interesting evidence of the recent progress and present condition of municipal statistics in Germany.

the German municipal congress. A meeting between representatives of this congress and representatives of the municipal statisticians held at Berlin in 1908 revealed an entire unanimity in their objects and methods. The German municipal congress has established the statistical yearbook of German cities on a firmer financial basis by subscribing for a definite number of copies. It has also paved the way for permanent coöperation by adding three administrative officers to the committee of statisticians on financial statistics.

If the position of municipal statistics within the city has been established, the dispassionate chronicler cannot say the same about the position of municipal statistics within the state and empire. The resolutions adopted by the conferences between 1879 and 1903, and published in the 11th volume of the series, dealt repeatedly with the relationship between municipal statistics and state and imperial statistics; and since the latter date hardly any conference has passed without touching upon this topic. The program of the first conference brought it up, one topic proposing that "the tabulation of all statistics which the communes gather for the state should be transferred to the municipal statistical bureaus." Since 1902 the conferences have been attended by a representative of the Imperial Statistical Office and since 1909 by a representative of the Prussian Statistical Office. Municipal statistics no doubt form a part of the state. But as the state consists of dissimilar parts, statistical presentation should vary with the kind of division. For portraying simpler relations like those in rural districts the statistician will be satisfied with a smaller number of colors than he needs for a large city. Hence it cannot be deemed enough to treat the whole country statistically from a single point of view, regarding the great cities only as enumeration areas and not describing them as independent organizations.

These theoretical requirements have occasionally been satisfied by state statistics, as in the enumeration of place of work and place of residence at the Prussian census of 1900 and the return of residence in Saxony and Württemburg. Still cases of this sort are exceptional and under the present development of state statistics must remain so. This makes a special treatment of municipal statistics all the more necessary.

The question of subsuming municipal statistics under imperial and state statistics has arisen of late not in connection with the census but with the statistics of prices. In fact state statistics of prices are nothing but municipal statistics. For example, the return of the retail prices of meat is important only within a city and becomes more important the larger the city and the more dependent it is upon remote districts for food.

This brings us to the second part of our subject, the statistics of the city as such. For this we need first of all to consider the great enumerations, like population censuses and industrial censuses, with which the conferences have been repeatedly concerned. At the industrial census of 1907 the municipal statisticians did not secure any recognition of their special interests. The conferences therefore limited themselves to giving repeated and thorough explanations regarding the work. Whoever in future sub-

jects the plan and execution of this census to a new examination will not overlook the discussion of Professor Schöbel (Chemnitz) at the conference.

Censuses also, especially those which extend beyond state limits, have been thoroughly discussed. Regarding the general principles of census-taking the conference in 1898 adopted the view that a law was needed as a guarantee of official support. At the last conference the statistics of servants were considered. In the excellent report on that subject an attempt was made to obtain from the census some statistical material of a general nature for the servant question. This is mainly a municipal question and finds its appropriate place in municipal statistics.

But the proper field of municipal statistics is housing statistics, especially the enumeration of tenements. This subject has been discussed before the conferences many times. In connection with it the statistics of land, of buildings and the occupations carried on in them, and of households and institutions have often been discussed. The registration of buildings constructed serves to carry on the study of the tenement market from one census to another. There are also enumerations of unoccupied tenements. Here, too, the conferences have obtained comparable returns. The results at present are compiled each quarter and published by the statistical office at Cologne.

Vital statistics have occupied the conferences but little. An exception is found in the statistics of causes of death. During the earlier period the system which grew out of the conference, the so-called "Flinzer-Lackner system," was often discussed. In more recent conferences the international, or Bertillon, system and later the systematic enumeration of causes of death proposed by the Imperial Health Office and the list of intermediate length developed therefrom for special purposes have been debated. On this topic Zimmerman of Cologne has rendered a permanent service and to him also the assembling of the monthly reports prepared by the different offices has been entrusted. But in other respects population statistics has long kept in the background at these conferences, the fourth conference, 1889, alone concerning itself with a thorough examination of the movement of population.

Recently, however, vital statistics has aroused great interest in two problems, infant mortality and the influence of natural feeding of infants upon it and the decrease of the birth rate, especially in great cities. As a result what Böckh, in the teeth of strenuous opposition, taught 25 years ago, has become common property.

In conformity with the development of social politics and the increase in the number of workmen employed by cities, statistical investigations regarding the working classes have been on the program from the first. The coöperation between municipal statisticians and the division of the Imperial Statistical Office devoted to labor statistics, for which a basis was laid at the conference of 1902, developed rapidly with very fruitful results through the work of Dr. Leo. The determination of the amount of employment based on reports of the beginning and end of sickness as first brought out by Silbergleit at Magdeburg was introduced in many other places in consequence of resolutions adopted in 1902. The utilization of the same

material for wage statistics was discussed in 1906. Returns of corporations were suggested as a basis for wage statistics in 1890 and the returns of employers under the Prussian income tax were debated in 1907. Thorough and careful returns regarding workmen's budgets led to an investigation of expenditures. This was decided upon at the conference at Stuttgart in 1906 and carried out with the coöperation of the Imperial Statistical Office.

With these fields of work the scope of these conferences is far from exhausted. The diversity of the material included in the municipal yearbook suggests many inquiries. Thus the statistics of scholars withdrawing from school grew out of the school statistics in the yearbook. This was limited by the conference of 1901 to the results of education and later, 1908, was extended to the occupation entered.

A subject which was placed on the program in 1910 for the first time but could not be given a hearing, statistical education in the German higher schools, must be mentioned. That statistics does not receive the treatment in the higher schools which its importance and its progress demand has recently been emphasized in various ways. I may mention here the argument of Bücher at the Magdeburg meeting of the Verein für Sozialpolitik. The Association of Municipal Statisticians, having among its members six teachers in such higher schools, cannot be denied the right to discuss this question.

This article gives only a very summary survey of the twenty-four conferences, but one thing appears, which all those who have had occasion to attend even one of them would confirm, namely that they are devoted to serious work. The close relations knit at these conferences between the members and with their guests from abroad representing municipal statistics at Basel, Zürich, Vienna, Budapest, Florence, and Amsterdam have borne much fruit. So the Association of German Municipal Statisticians, when it shall have reached its twenty-fifth conference, can look back over profitable work and forward with courage to the future.

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Note—The proposal to form a German statistical society has made a little progress in the last few months. The German Sociological Society has laid emphasis from the start upon the coöperation of statisticians and has elected a number of them to membership. At its meeting in October 1910 at Frankfurt-am-Main it resolved to establish a special section on statistics. Since statisticians can not attend every gathering which is related in any way to their diverse activities, the Sociological Society also resolved that the programs for this statistical section should be broad enough to include all questions of interest to statisticians, even though they do not fall exactly within the field of sociology. If this section is organized along these lines, it will be a step towards realizing the desire long expressed for a German association in which official statisticians, academic statisticians and all persons engaged in this profession may coöperate.